UN joint webinar on Ensuring Inclusion of Learners with Disabilities in Open and Distance Learning

8 July 2021, Almaty

CONTENT

Agenda

8 July 2021	Agenda item
2:00 pm – 2:30 pm	1. Registration
2:30 pm – 2:40 pm	2. Welcome to the workshop by Krista Pikkat, UNESCO Representative to Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and O.I.C. in Uzbekistan, Director Almaty Cluster Office
	3. Sue Swenson, Representative Inclusive Education Task Team of the International Disability Alliance, partner in UN Partnership on the Persons with Disabilities (UNPRDP) Joint Programme
2:40 pm – 3:10 pm	4. Representative from each country to describe the situation in their country (5 min each): Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan
3:10 pm – 3:30 pm	5. Presentation of Learning for All: Guidelines on the Inclusion of Learners with Disabilities in Open and Distance Learning – Dr Dianne Chambers Associate Professor
3:30 pm – 3:45 pm	6. Completion of online poll on Pre-requisite Action Checklist by participants, assisted by Sergey Karpov
3:45 pm – 4:25 pm	7. Q&A session – Facilitated by Meirgul Alpysbayeva and Sergey Karpov, UNESCO Almaty
4:25 pm – 4:30 pm	8. Conclusion and Closing remarks by UNESCO Almaty

Rationale

Today, over one billion people - approximately 15 per cent of the world's population - live with some form of disability. This figure is accelerating in line with population increases, growing poverty, natural disasters, ongoing conflicts, and an ageing population. Many persons with disabilities face a wide range of barriers to access education, crucial public information, public services, health care, infrastructure, and employment.

Available evidence and statistical data indicate that educational opportunities for many persons with disabilities often stop at secondary education level due to limited infrastructure and education related - facilities provided by tertiary education institutions. These limitations include the lack of financial and skilled human resources, inaccessible content, undeveloped support services as well as the high cost of assistive devices and information and communication technologies (ICTs).

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights states that all people have basic inalienable rights and fundamental freedoms that include civil and political rights, liberty and privacy, and the right to education. It is the human right to education that drives the agenda for inclusive and accessible practices and the requirement for persons with disabilities to have access to education at all levels and in all forms.

Moreover, the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPWD) emphasises access to education among other things as an important consideration towards making reasonable accommodation for persons with disabilities.

According to the International Labour Organization (ILO) , the inclusion of persons with disabilities in the workforce represents a very high level of untapped human resources. An ILO pilot study of 10 low and middle-income developing countries found that the loss to gross domestic product (GDP) from the exclusion of persons with disabilities from the labour market is estimated to be between 3 and 7 per cent of GDP.

UNESCO's Convention against Discrimination in Education (1960) in line with the above-mentioned UN instruments prohibit any attempt to deny or restrict access to education based on socially ascribed or perceived differences such as gender, ethnic/social origin, language, religion, nationality, economic status, ability. In this regard, UNESCO promotes systems of inclusive education that remove barriers that limit the participation and success of all learners, take into account different needs, abilities and characteristics, and eliminate all forms of discrimination in the learning environment.

Moreover, Sustainable Development Goal 4 on education and the Education 2030 Agenda recognize inclusion and equity as pillars of quality education, envisioning "inclusive and equitable quality education and the promotion of lifelong learning opportunities for all".

At the same time, ensuring that everyone has an equal opportunity to progress in learning continues to be a challenge around the world. According to the UNESCO Global Education Monitoring Report, " All Means All," children with disabilities and children from ethnic minorities remain underserved despite overall progress in access to education over the past 20 years and a 50 percent drop in out-of-school children. Despite the progress made, children with disabilities are still more likely to be out of school and excluded from mainstream education. In several countries in Central Asia and the Southern Caucasus, the proportion of children with disabilities who are not in school is, on average, twice as high as the proportion who are in school.

The COVID-19 pandemic has also exacerbated existing inequalities in access to quality education for excluded and marginalized groups, including students with special needs. According to the UNESCO Global Education Monitoring Report, the pandemic will set back steps toward educational integration in the Central Asian and South Caucasus region. It is estimated that Internet learning is a problem for one in four secondary school students without a laptop, and one in ten without access to the Internet.

Moreover, in line with UNESCO's constitutional commitment to "the free exchange of ideas and knowledge" supports sharing of knowledge using technologies and is key to its mission is to build Knowledge Societies that are inclusive, pluralistic, equitable, open and participatory for all citizens. In this context, UNESCO promotes the inclusion of persons with disabilities through information and communication technologies (ICTs), in particular through access to information and knowledge for persons with disabilities. Technologies that assist persons with disabilities can improve the quality of life of persons with disabilities by facilitating their access to knowledge and information, education, health, and employment. An online knowledge community on building inclusive societies for people with disabilities is being developed. See the local context, statistics, and UNESCO activities on the last page.

Taking into account the different needs of people, and in order to enable students with disabilities to participate fully in learning and integrate as active and equal participants in society, UNESCO has developed Learning for All: Guidelines for the Inclusion of Students with Disabilities in Open and Distance Learning. This document provides guidelines and

recommendations for all stakeholders in education, information, technology and policy to advance the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the empowerment of many people with disabilities around the world.

These guidelines provide an up-to-date perspective on the increasingly technological approaches used to provide education for people with disabilities and an overview for government agencies, educational institutions, instructors and instructional designers, along with quality assurance and recognition bodies, when developing Open and Distance Learning (ODL) platforms, processes, courses, examinations and more to address the needs of all users.

UNESCO, as part of the UN Joint project to support countries design and implement disability inclusive response and recovery planning for Covid-19, has updated these Guidelines and included information on 'Emergency Response' Actions and updated links. This revised version will be available in the fall of 2021 in full. The Emergency Response Checklist developed in the framework of this project is available now.

About webinar

On July 8, UNESCO and UNPRPD is organizing a webinar on "Ensuring Inclusion of Learners with Disabilities in Open and Distance Learning" in Almaty for participants from Central Asia and the Caucasus on the Zoom platform.

The webinar aims to present the UNESCO's *Learning for All: Guidelines on the Inclusion of Learners with Disabilities in Open and Distance Learning* to all stakeholders on the integration of technological approaches used to provide education for persons with disabilities. Recognizing the value of open and distance learning (ODL) as one of the most sustainable methods of overcoming the educational barriers faced by people with disabilities.

Registration

The webinar will be held in Zoom platform with the simultaneous interpretation from English to Russian and vice versa. To register please follow the link: https://unesco-org.zoom.us/meeting/register/tJIrf-mvqDgrHtT6fbztXrhsRbT7avoX11Dv

More info is available here: http://en.unesco.kz/webinar-on-ensuring-inclusion-of-learners-with-disabilities-in-open-and-distance-learning

Topics for discussion

Webinar will cover aspects of ODL-based education system using Open Educational Resources (OER)[1], Free and Open Source Software (FOSS), and Open Access (OA).

The webinar draws on the UNESCO Guidelines to provide an overview for governments, educational institutions, educators, and curriculum developers, as well as quality assurance and recognition bodies, in developing ODL platforms, processes, courses, exams and more to address the needs of all users. It will allow stakeholders to easily navigate and assess the degree of capacity building they need to undertake, based on a contextualized selection of relevant criteria.

These assessments are made possible by allowing stakeholders to strategically assess the specific issues that will arise in the ODL discussion, from preliminary actions to implementation and monitoring processes for educational programs. Participants will be able to assess the checklist on the prerequisites of the ODL.

Dr Dianne Chambers, Associate Professor of Teacher Education, University of Notre Dame, Australia, expert and co-author will present the Guidelines "Learning for All: Inclusion of Learners with Disabilities in Open Distance Learning" and its revisions to respond to the Covid-19 pandemic educational crisis.

Participants

The webinar will be attended by representatives of ministries of education, educational organizations, digital and distancing learning platform developers, civil society and other institutions working to ensure inclusive education for persons with disabilities from

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[1] Open Education Resources (OER) are learning, teaching and research materials in any format and medium that reside in the public domain or are under copyright that have been released under an open license, that permit no-cost access, re-use, re-purpose, adaptation and redistribution by others. Open license refers to a license that respects the intellectual property rights of the copyright owner and provides permissions granting the public the rights to access, re-use, re-purpose, adapt and redistribute educational materials. (Definition: UNESCO OER Recommendation: http://portal.unesco.org/en/ev.php-URL_ID=49556&URL_DO=DO_TOPIC&URL_SECTION=201.html)

Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Russia as well as organizations from Tajikistan, Uzbekistan, Azerbaijan, Armenia and Georgia.
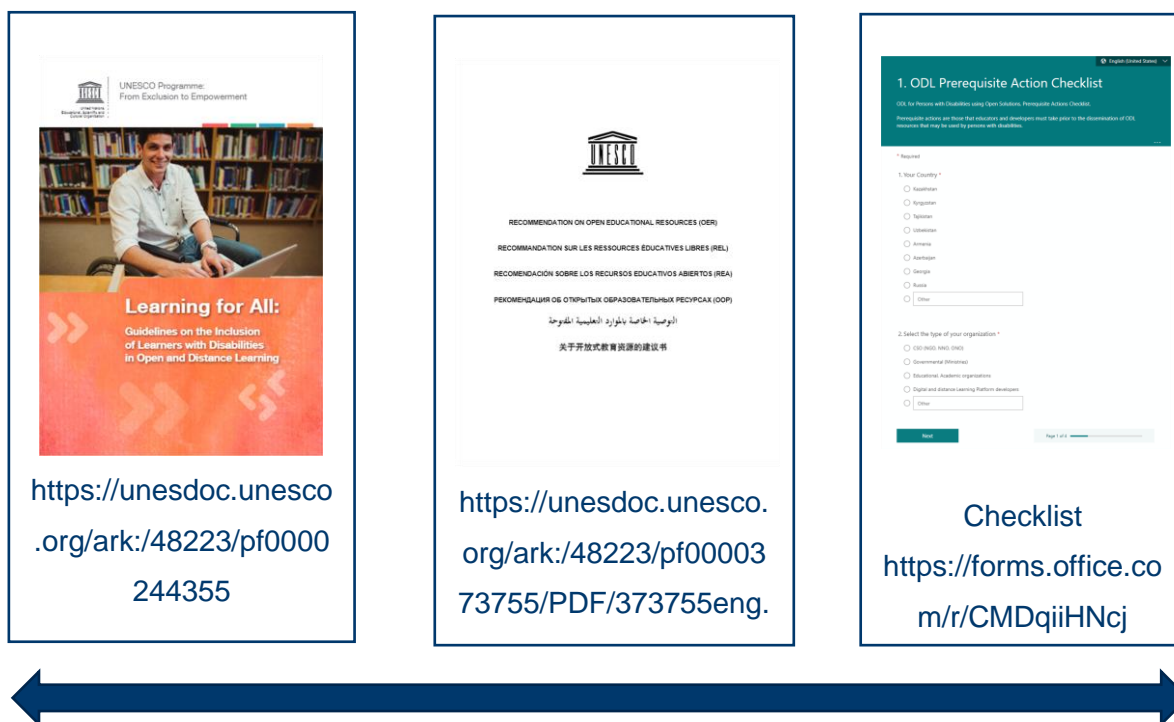
Expected results

1. Strengthen the capacity of representatives from government agencies, educational organizations, and the civil sector to provide inclusive open and distance education.

2. Familiarize all stakeholders with basic guidelines and recommendations for the inclusion of students with disabilities in open and distance learning.

3. Provide recommendations to improve the legal and regulatory framework for ODL to select, develop, use, maintain, assess, and evaluate suitable platforms and tools.

UNESCO Resources

- Learning for All: Guidelines on the Inclusion of Learners with Disabilities in Open and Distance Learning (EN), a Russian version will be available by the beginning of the webinar

- The UNESCO OER Recommendation is available (EN), (RU)

- Prerequisite Action in Checklist (EN)

Figure 1: UNESCO Resources.

https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000244355

https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000373755/PDF/373755eng.

Checklist
https://forms.office.com/r/CMDqiiHNcj

- Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (2006) (EN), (RU)

  - Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (EN), (RU)

  - Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (EN), (RU)